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Functional Classification of Buildings

The primary application of the Functional Classification of Buildings is to classify buildings according to their predominant function or purpose

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Preface

The Functional Classification of Buildings (FCB) was designed in 1986 by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to provide a standard framework for the classification of buildings and building work according to their function. It is used in the collection, production and dissemination of the ABS' building statistics. New buildings and alterations to existing buildings are classified or assigned to the FCB according to their usage upon completion of construction work. There have been two revisions since 1986 to the classification.

The 2021 revision to the classification was undertaken to address significant changes in the building industry, especially the composition of the types of residential buildings being constructed (the growing share of semi-detached dwellings and taller apartment buildings), as well as emerging stakeholder needs that are not reflected in the current classification. It is broadly compatible with earlier editions.

The key changes in the 2021 classification are:

- Removal of the reference to 500-millimetre separation in the definition of "Separate houses". This reflects the now common-place practice of constructing two dwellings adjacent to one another on a common boundary, with no physical attachment between the two dwellings. This change also brings the definition into better alignment with the building classes in the National Construction Code.
- An additional subclass for "Detached secondary dwellings". These were previously classified as "Separate houses".
- Providing further granularity for apartment buildings through two subclasses; "Apartments in a four to eight storey block" and "Apartments in a nine or more storey block". These replace the "Apartments in a four or more storey block" subclass in the 1999 FCB. The reason for breaking up the two subclasses at 8/9 storeys is because there are additional building rules that apply if their height exceeds 25 metres, which is typically around eight storeys.

Purpose

The primary application of the Functional Classification of Buildings (FCB) is to classify buildings, or building work according to their stated predominant function or purpose.

It is principally used in the economic collections of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

Data is compiled using this classification in a range of ABS publications including:

[Building Approvals, Australia \(/statistics/industry/building-and-construction/building-approvals-australia/latest-release\)](/statistics/industry/building-and-construction/building-approvals-australia/latest-release)

[Building Activity, Australia \(/statistics/industry/building-and-construction/building-activity-australia/latest-release\)](/statistics/industry/building-and-construction/building-activity-australia/latest-release)

[Construction Work Done, Australia, Preliminary \(/statistics/industry/building-and-construction/construction-work-done-australia-preliminary/latest-release\)](/statistics/industry/building-and-construction/construction-work-done-australia-preliminary/latest-release)

For the purpose of this primary application a building is a rigid, fixed and permanent structure which has a roof. Its intended purpose is primarily to house people, plant, machinery, vehicles, goods or livestock. An integral feature of a building's design is the provision for regular access by persons in order to satisfy its intended use.

For these collections the function of the completed building, or building work, is determined

at the time the building approval is lodged.

In cases where a building may have multiple functions or purposes it is normally classified to the predominant function or purpose. There are exceptions:

- Multi-purpose buildings where the purposes or functions are independent and, if individually coded, would have an impact on published aggregates in their class. (For example multi-storey urban buildings with commercial and residential components). In these cases, an FCB code may be applied for each major function of a building.
- Building work to alter, extend or renovate a non-residential building may be coded to the purpose or function applicable to the alterations rather than the building as a whole. (For example, the work to add a cinema complex to a shopping centre may be coded as "Entertainment and recreation", rather than "Retail").

As the classification encompasses all building types, it can be used for other applications.

A concordance with a subset of the FCB is also used to classify buildings in ABS population and social collections such as the Census of Population and Housing and monthly Labour Force Surveys. For more information, please refer to the 'Relationship with Social Classifications' section of this document.

The Classification structure

The classification has a hierarchical structure split into four divisions, eighteen classes and thirty-three subclasses.

The divisions are:

1 Residential Buildings

2 Commercial Buildings

3 Industrial Buildings

4 Other non-residential Buildings

Commercial Buildings, Industrial Buildings and Other non-residential Buildings are together referred to as Non-residential Buildings. Each division is detailed in its own subsection.

Functional Classification of Buildings 2021 structure

1 Residential Buildings

11 Houses
111 Separate houses
112 Kit houses
113 Transportable/relocatable houses
114 Detached secondary dwellings
12 Semi-detached, row or terrace houses, townhouses
121 One storey
122 Two or more storeys
13 Apartments
131 In a one or two storey block
132 In a three storey block
133 In a four to eight storey block
134 In a nine or more storey block
139 Attached to a house
19 Residential buildings not elsewhere classified
191 Residential buildings not elsewhere classified

2 Commercial Buildings

21 Retail and wholesale trade buildings
211 Retail and wholesale trade buildings
22 Transport buildings
221 Passenger transport buildings
222 Non-passenger transport buildings
223 Commercial car parks
224 Transport buildings not elsewhere classified
23 Offices
231 Offices
29 Commercial buildings not elsewhere classified
291 Commercial buildings not elsewhere classified

3 Industrial Buildings

31 Factories and other secondary production buildings
311 Factories and other secondary production buildings
32 Warehouses
321 Warehouses (excluding produce storage)
33 Agricultural and aquacultural buildings

331 Agricultural and aquacultural buildings
39 Other industrial buildings not elsewhere classified
391 Other industrial buildings not elsewhere classified
4 Other Non-residential Buildings
41 Education buildings
411 Education buildings
42 Religion buildings
421 Religion buildings
43 Aged care facilities
431 Aged care facilities
44 Health buildings
441 Hospitals
442 Health buildings not elsewhere classified
45 Entertainment and recreation buildings
451 Entertainment and recreation buildings
46 Short-term accommodation buildings
461 Self-contained, short-term apartments
462 Hotels (predominately accommodation), motels, boarding houses, or lodges
463 Short-term accommodation buildings not elsewhere classified
49 Other non-residential buildings not elsewhere classified
491 Other non-residential buildings not elsewhere classified

1 Residential Buildings

Buildings that contain one or more dwellings, intended for the provision of long-term accommodation. Examples include: detached houses, townhouses and apartments. Ancillary outbuildings not containing dwellings built adjacent to existing residential buildings, such as garden sheds, gazebos and free standing garages, are treated as residential buildings.

For the purposes of this classification, a dwelling is considered to be a suite of rooms contained within a building intended for long-term residential use, possessing cooking and bathing/shower facilities as building fixtures. A house is considered to be a detached residential building containing a single dwelling.

This division excludes buildings providing short-term commercial accommodation and those providing communal accommodation or temporarily housing itinerant workers or students. These are classified as non-residential buildings.

Where significant non-residential functions are contained in a building, such as shops, hotel/motel rooms, or offices, the building should be coded to the appropriate non-residential class. This may, for example, occur where a dwelling is attached to, or enclosed within, a non-residential building.

An exception is in the case of multi-storey, mixed-use buildings with several floors devoted to apartments. In these cases, the residential floors may be coded as “Apartments”.

Classes and subclasses

2 Commercial Buildings

Buildings primarily occupied with or engaged in commercial trade or work intended for commercial trade, including buildings used primarily for retail and wholesale trade, office and transport activities.

Notwithstanding any commercial trade use, this division explicitly excludes industrial and residential buildings as well as those predominantly for the provision of education, religious worship or other religious activities, health or veterinary care, recreation, entertainment, temporary accommodation, or the provision of care to children, the aged, or other persons (as per the classes defined in the Other non-residential Buildings division).

Classes and subclasses

3 Industrial Buildings

Buildings used for warehousing, primary production and the production and assembly activities of industrial or manufacturing processes. This division also includes factories and plants, and buildings used for agricultural and aquacultural activities.

Classes and subclasses

4 Other non-residential Buildings

Non-residential buildings for the provision of education, religious worship or other religious activities, aged and health care, recreation, entertainment, or commercial temporary accommodation. It also includes emergency services, utilities and other care and public services except where classified to Commercial or Industrial divisions.

Classes and subclasses

Relationship with other classifications

At the time of revision of the FCB, the ABS' endorsed standard for dwelling statistics was the Dwelling Structure. The Dwelling Structure classification covers only residential buildings and classifies private dwellings according to their structure. The Residential division of the FCB is broadly consistent with Dwelling Structure apart from the class of Houses where the FCB provides greater detail than Dwelling Structure, and the Dwelling Structure "Other dwelling" class which includes non-permanent and mobile dwellings such as caravans, tents and houseboats, which are excluded from the FCB.

The data produced by the FCB is consistent with the same concepts and principles applying to ABS collections which use the Dwelling Structure classification. There are however methodological differences across ABS collections. The Building Approvals and Building Activity collections classify buildings according to information reported in approval documents and during construction activity, and therefore provide information on buildings according to their original stated function. The Census of Population and Housing for example, provides the stock of dwellings at a specific point in time, based on how buildings are used. The use of a building at the time of collection may differ to that reported on the original building approval.

The use of the term, private, has different applications in the FCB and Dwelling Structure. In the FCB, buildings are further classified by ownership, according to the sector (i.e. public or private) of the intended owner of the building at the time of the approval. This classification does not apply to the Dwelling Structure. The term 'private dwelling' is used in the Dwelling Structure to indicate private occupancy.

The FCB structure broadly aligns with the relevant parts of the internationally recognised [Central Product Classification version 2.1](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/classifications/Econ/Download/In%20Text/CPCv2.1_complete(PDF)_English.pdf) (CPC v2.1, Group 531 - Buildings) to the 4-digit level, with some differences in the split between residential versus non-residential buildings. There are more significant divergences at the 5-digit level. The FCB aligns with the [Input Output Product Classification \(IOPC\)](https://statistics/economy/national-accounts/australian-national-accounts-input-output-tables-product-details/latest-release) used in the Australian System of National Accounts, the [Australian and New Zealand Standard Commodity Classification \(ANZSCC\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/allprimarymainfeatures/F1B37227B80E36F6CA25722E0017B274?opendocument), and the [Harmonized System](https://www.trade.gov/harmonized-system-hs-codes), but provides far more detail than any of them.

Concordance: 2021 to 1999 classification

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